

Message Text

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PAGE 01 COTONO 00760 161449Z

53

ACTION AID-59

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-25 ISO-00 SCI-06 PC-10 USIA-15 IO-14

INR-10 DODE-00 AGR-20 INT-08 COME-00 FDRE-00 SWF-02

EB-11 IGA-02 DRC-01 RSC-01 /195 W

----- 043924

R 161200Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6179

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

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AFDROUGHT

ROME FOR FODAG

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAID, DM, NG, US

SUBJECT: SITUATION IN COTONOU PORT

1. PESSIMISTS IN COTONOU, LED BY WFP REP BUT INCLUDING SEVERAL
EXPERIENCED TRANSPORTATION SPECIALISTS, ARE PREDICTING OCDN
WILL BE INCAPABLE OF MEETING HEAVY DEMANDS OVER NEXT 45 DAYS.
SENIOR EXPATRIATE OFFICIAL AT OCDN PRIVATELY ESTIMATED
TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM WOULD NOT BE ABLE DELIVER MORE THAN
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PAGE 02 COTONO 00760 161449Z

AN AVERAGE OF 550 MT PER DAY ON SUSTAINED BASIS. THERE NOW

SOMEWHAT LESS THAN 10,000 MT IN PORT. WFP ESTIMATES BETWEEN 24,000 AND 29,000 MT WILL ARRIVE IN PORT DURING REMAINDER OF MAY AND JUNE FROM ALL DONORS. AT RATE OF 550 PER DAY, SOME 10,000-15,000 MT WOULD STILL BE IN PORT ON JULY 1. PRESUMABLY, THIS WOULD THEN BE MUCH MORE DIFFICULT TO DISTRIBUTE IN NIGER AS IT WOULD BE ARRIVING AFTER RAINS BEGAN.

2. ON BASIS OUR OWN ADMITTEDLY INEXPERT ASSESSMENT, WE DO NOT FULLY ACCEPT ABOVE DIRE PREDICTIONS. THERE NO DOUBT OCDN, PORT AND FREIGHT FORWARDERS WILL HAVE TO STRAIN FACILITIES TO OUTER LIMIT TO MEET HEAVY DEMANDS. HOWEVER, WE ENCOURAGED BY FIRM, ENERGETIC ACTIONS TAKEN BY OCDN DIRECTOR DO REGO AFTER HIS RETURN FROM NIAMEY YESTERDAY WHERE HE REPORTEDLY COMMITTED HIMSELF TO 750 MT PER DAY. FIRST, HE ORDERED TEMPORARY STOP TO COTTON SHIPMENTS FROM PARAKOU TO COTONOU WHICH HAVE BEEN MAJOR FACTOR IN PORT CONGESTION. SECOND, HE ORDERED 2/3 OF OCDN CAPACITY BE DEVOTED TO SHIPMENT RELIEF SUPPLIES DURING CRITICAL PERIOD. THIRD, HE NOW PERSONALLY ALLOCATING BOX CARS TO FORWARDING AGENTS. WHEN AGENTS DO NOT IMMEDIATELY BEGIN FILLING CARS, HE REALLOCATES TO ANOTHER AGENT WHO IS READY WORK THEM. FOURTH, DO REGO HAS ORDERED PARAKOU TRANSSHIPPING FACILITY TO WORK SUNDAYS. ON MRGD SIDE, MINISTER TRANSPORT IS PERSONALLY FOLLOWING DAILY SHIPPING AND LOADING OPERATIONS. HE HAS SAID HE WILL COME DOWN WITH BOTH FEET ON ANY ONE WHO DOES NOT PERFORM. ALREADY, TONNAGES SHIPPED HAVE INCREASED OVER PAST FEW DAYS FROM AVERAGE OF ABOUT 300 MT PER DAY LAST WEEK TO OVER 500 MT PER DAY SINCE LAST SATURDAY. TEMPO OF ACTIVITY IN PORT AREA APPEARS TO BE INCREASING AS SENIOR OFFICIALS LIKE DO REGO GIVE INCREASING PERSONAL ATTENTION TO OPERATIONS.

3. BELIEVE IT CRUCIAL PRESSURES ON FORWARDING AGENTS, RAILWAY AND PORT AUTHORITIES BE MAINTAINED AT HIGH LEVEL LEST THEIR EFFORTS FLAG. TO HELP SUSTAIN PRESSURE, EMBASSY, WITH HELP OF ADO LOME, HAVE OR PLAN TAKE FOLLOWING ACTIONS:
A. EX-PCV MIKE GLATTE HAS BEEN HIRED ON TEMPORARY BASIS TO EXPEDITE U.S. GRAIN SHIPMENTS, IDENTIFY WEAKNESSES IN SYSTEM AND GATHER RELIABLE, TIMELY INFO ON PERFORMANCE PORT, RAILWAY AND PARAKOU TRANSSHIPPING FACILITY. HE WILL BE WORKING CLOSELY WITH WFP REP WHO IS ATTEMPTING COORDINATE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 COTONO 00760 161449Z

EFFORTS OF ALL DONORS. GLATTE ARRIVED YESTERDAY AND IS ALREADY BRINGING HIS CONSIDERABLE ENERGY AND ENTHUSIASM TO BEAR.
B. AM ATTEMPTING GET REPS OF MAIN DONORS -- I.E. FRENCH, GERMAN, FED AND US -- TO CONCENTRATE AND SUSTAIN THEIR EFFORTS PRESS AGENTS, OCDN AND PORT AUTHORITIES TO ATTAIN AND MAINTAIN HIGH LEVEL PERFORMANCE.
C. HAVE ALSO URGED NIGER PER REP COTONOU TO PUSH OCDN AND MRGD TO MEET PROMISE MADE BY DO REGO TO GON OF 750 MT

PER DAY. HE ALREADY HAS SEEN DO REGO AND WENT TO PARAKOU
YESTERDAY INSPECT TRANSIT FACILITIES.

D. WE HELPING WFP GATHER INFO ON AVAILABILITY AND
PRICE OF TRUCKS TRANSPORT GRAIN DIRECTLY FROM COTONOU TO NIGER.

E. CHARGE MAKING REGULAR VISITS TO PORT AND RAILWAY
FACILITIES TO DEMONSTRATE IMPORTANCE WE ATTACH TO OPERATION
AND CLOSE INTEREST WITH WHICH WE FOLLOWING DETAILS.

F. CHARGE PLANNING MAKE PERSONAL GROUND RECONNAISSANCE
OF RAIL AND ROAD LINE BETWEEN COTONOU AND NIAMEY LEAVING
EARLY MAY 18 AND RETURNING ABOUT NOON MAY 20. PLANNING
OVERNIGHT IN NIAMEY WITH OPPORTUNITY TO CONSULT WITH RDO
AND FFPO. (ASSUME DEPARTMENT WOULD HAVE NO OBJECTION TO
ABSENCE FROM DAHOMEY FOR 10-12 HOURS.) IN PARAKOU, WILL
VISIT TRANSSHIPPING FACILITIES AND CONSULT WITH SACOTRA REP.

G. PERSONNEL IN EMBASSY COTONOU HAVE BEEN INFORMED THAT
DURING PRESENT CRITICAL PERIOD, MOVEMENT OF RELIEF SUPPLIES
WILL BE MISSION'S NUMBER ONE PRIORITY. OTHER, LESS
IMPORTANT BUSINESS, MAY HAVE TO SUFFER.
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Message Attributes

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